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Associations against the established Church
indefensible.

A
SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
AT ST. MARY'S,

ON
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24. 1772.

BY JOHN ALLEN, M.A.
Vice-Principal of St. Mary Magdalene-Hall.

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for the Colonies

A

STERMON

THE SECOND EDITION

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



Printed by J. Johnson, Strand

BY JOHN ALLEN, M.A.

Author of 'The History of the British Museum'

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TO
PETER WALDO ESQ.
OF

MITCHAM IN SURRY.

TO the truly *Meritorious* the Vapour of a Dungeon is not more offensive than *Adulation*; and I am sure the Gentleman, whom I have the Honour to address at this Time, needeth no *Censer-Prostitution* to perfume a Character, the Ingredients of which are sound Erudition, rational Piety, and undissembled Philanthropy. Accomplishments! which shine so bright in a *Commentary on the Liturgy of the Church of England, as used on Sundays*, and in an *Essay on the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, that He must be insensible to the Charms of good *Writing* as well as of good *Living*, who doth not congratulate with true Religion, and an *insulted Church*, on the Addition of

a *new Name* to the Number of *Their* Friends — of a *new Star* to the glorious Constellation which is marked with the Names of *Boyle, Nelson, West* and *Wogan*.

Truth is not less *Truth* for being *afflicted*, as the Ark was not less the Residence of *Jehovah* in the House of *Dagon* than in the Temple of *Solomon*. To Him therefore who owns, supports, and adorns *Her* with an Head, an Hand and an Heart which go All of them together in promoting the Cause of Christianity, I beg Leave to dedicate a Discourse, that was heard with good Acceptance by an University which rejoiceth at finding that her Sons, particularly *Those* of the Laity, *walk in Truth*. I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate and

obliged humble Servant,

J. ALLEN.

ISAIAH VIII. 9, 10.

*Associate yourselves, O ye People, and
ye shall be broken in pieces; and give
ear, all ye of far Countries: gird
yourselves, and ye shall be broken in
pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall
be broken in pieces.*

*Take Counsel together, and it shall come
to nought; speak the Word, and it
shall not stand: for God is with us.*

A similar Strain of Triumph and holy
Indignation may be seen in the se-
cond Psalm, in which a larger *Assoc-*
iation than that which is *insulted* in the Text,
is branded and pronounced to be unsuc-
cessful.

A The

The *Combination*, referred to by our Prophet, was at once wicked and *unnatural*; for the Israelites had united with a Crew of Idolatrous Syrians to extirpate their Brethren of Judah; or, in other Words, to defeat God's Promises to *David* and destroy that Church, which his own right hand had planted, and, in which, he was worshipped in the *Beauty of Holiness*. Accordingly a Correspondence was opened between Samaria and Damascus, to which the Latter might accede the more readily if He discovered no difference between *Calf-Worship* and the falling down to the Stocks and Stones of his own Country. So that the Hope of Plunder being strengthened by a Similitude of religious Sentiments Rezin became a chearful Ally to Him of Ephraim.

But while these Enemies to the *Crown* and *Church* of Judah were *associating* and plotting, and anticipating the *Downfall* of the House of David, He, who "frustrateth
 " the Tokens of the *Liar*, and maketh *Di-*
 " viners mad and turneth wise men back-
 " ward and maketh their knowledge foolish
 " --- He, who confirmeth the Word of his
 " Servant and performeth the Counsel of his
 " Messen-

“Messengers,” perceiving that “the Heart
 “of the House of David was moved, and
 “the Heart of his People, as the Trees of
 “the Wood are moved with the Wind, be-
 cause Syria was confederate with Ephraim,
 dispatcht his Prophet *Isaiah* to King *Ahaz*,
 who said to *Him*, “Take heed and be quiet;
 “fear not, neither be fainted-hearted for the
 “two Tails of these smoking Fire-brands,
 “for the fierce Anger of *Rhezim* with Syria,
 “and of the Son of *Remaliah* --- for thus
 “saith the Lord God, It shall not stand,
 “neither shall It come to pass.” The Event
 took place, the Church was saved and the
 impious Conspiracy was, at that time, broken
 in Pieces.

This Deliverance of a distressed State from
 the Hostility of false Brethren confederating
 with sworn Foes to true Religion, suggests
 an Enquiry after the Motives of later Affo-
 ciations. For the Church of God, under
 every Period since, hath been assailed by
 every Weapon that Malice can forge and Vio-
 lence brandish. And no Purity, no For-
 bearance, no Charitableness in the soundest
 Branches of it have screened them from Pe-
 tulance and Outrage. Nay the Scorners, and
 half-

half-Believer shoot out their Arrows, which, God be praised, are at present, only bitter Words, as frequently and venomously at the *most reformed* as at the most corrupt Communion in Christendom. Now the Reasons, such as They are, for this unprovoked Hostility are too many to be *all* enumerated in this Place --- I will therefore mention a Doctrine or two maintained and assented to by our own Church which occasions the Opposition she meets with from the clamors of innovating and exterminating Spirits.

I. Among Those that *name* the Name of Christ there are two Sorts of Men whose Sentiments are and must always be irreconcilable. Upon the freest Enquiry and most rational Interpretation of Scripture *These* have discovered that the same Scripture supposes, proceeds upon, asserts and repeats a Doctrine, which at once mortifies human Pride and magnifies God's Mercy, viz. that every one born into this World brings with him an hereditary Pravity, which is discovered by continual Propensities to what is wrong and which there is but one possible Method of counteracting. The *Others* from a partial Survey and false Estimate of their Composition

tion declare against this Defilement, and tell us that every Day God creates *Man* upright, and ascribe all mental Disorders and atrocious Actions to *his* having found out many Inventions. The *first* think they can no more *save*, than they could have *created*, themselves, and therefore fly to the all-sufficient merits of a Mediator. The *latter* pretend to inward Resources supplied by what is called *Philosophy*, and strengthened by Lessons of Morality, acknowledged to be rather *more pure* than the Precepts of an *uncommissioned* Socrates. *These* account for every Disease in the natural and moral World by referring to the true Source of them — Man's Defection from God. *Those* vex themselves with various Discussions about the *Origin of Evil*, and always leave the Subject just as they found it. *These* easily untie a *Knot* which cannot be loosened by the Advocates for native Rectitude -- I mean the Reconcilement of God's tender Mercy over all his Works with the Sickness, Pangs and Deaths of unfinning Infants. The *one Part* makes God the Author of Sin by making him unjust and cruel. The *other* throws the Blame of *Evil* on Man, and vindicates the Divine Attributes by shewing the introduction of *It* to be the real Consequence of
Man's

Man's free Agency. The *sound Believer* discriminates between God's *ordaining* and God's *permitting* Providence, while the *Other* smiles at the *Distinction* and exclaimeth, impertinently, that nothing but Good can proceed from infinite Goodness. Again, History is appealed to as recounting Crimes so black and detestable that their authors could not have committed them by mere *Imitation*, which must have flowed therefore from original and untaught Viciousness. And if History wanted Confirmation, the undebauched Reason of every Man, his Conscientiousness and constant Experience testify that *smaller Deviations* from Duty *must* be traced up to the same Fountain.

And now is it unfair to inculcate this Truth? Or weak or wicked to *subscribe* or demand a Subscription to It? Doth any Society of Christians infringe the Liberty or invade the private Judgement of any Man by calling upon Him to give his unforced, his voluntary assent to so concerning a Verity before he steps forth a Teacher of Others? Or ought he to step forth a Teacher of Others, and be permitted to carry so *much of Deism* into the Pulpit, as to tell the *weary and heavy laden* who pant for
Pardon

Pardon through the all-atoning Merits of a Saviour, that Fears about an *Hereafter* are generally superstitious, and that they would do well to *consult the Faculty* till they became conscious of the Dignity of human Nature? Is it, I repeat it, unjust to counterwork such Poison by the Provision of a *Test of religious Opinions*?

2. Again. To assert, what is clearly consequential of our Belief of a *transmitted Corruption*, that there is an *utter Incapacity* in every one born of Woman to *think, speak and act*, so as to please God, without *prevenient Grace*, may shock the Conceptions of a modern Reformer; but It is to *advance* what is grounded on the sure Word of Inspiration, and hath the Suffrages of some of the wisest Moralists in the Heathen World. For hereby the Will is no way constrained nor the Understanding invaded, so that unless to *Illuminate, to Assist, and Incline*, be to destroy Man's free Agency. He continues an *accountable Being* still, and *Fears* for Morality are groundless or hypocritical, because the Distinction between moral Good and Evil is preserved without the least Diminution. To try to prove Man a Machine because he cannot embrace

brace Good and ensue it before God *suggests* Good to Him, which he has *full Liberty* to reject, is to try to prove too much; for by such Procedure it would appear that the Restless and the Malevolent are mere *Automata*, because they are often restrained from † *purposing*, and from accomplishing their Purposes, by an Interposition, which is sure and certain, though we cannot comprehend it, nor reconcile the free Agency of Man and the Prescience of his Maker. Indeed till these Propositions, which are Both true, be *proved* to be compatible, Modesty should restrain every One from impugning the greatest *seeming* Contradictions, and from demurring to the most sublime and retired mysteries.

3. Once more. An Aversion from every thing that looks like Coercion impells many to quarrel with our established Church, as if she despised or lightly esteemed Virtue or moral Honesty. If a Charge of this Kind could be made good she would be too much hurt to look her Accusers in the Face. Her Wound would indeed be grievous and even incurable. For a Contempt of Morality would be a Reason sufficient for unchurch-

† *Exod.* 34. 24.

ing any Communion upon the Earth. But tho' unsupported Objections destroy themselves, yet the Clearness of her Character in this Respect need not hinder her Friends from shewing to Others that She is not concerned in this Accusation. If we find in any Part of her Constitution certain Actions stigmatized as *Shining Sins* or *Painted Corruptions*, That is no Condemnation of the *Morality* which is the Offspring and Concomitant of *Faith*. And *Morality as such* is no more arraigned by her, than she decrys the Light of the Sun or the Necessity of Food. She affirms indeed, what every one with the Bible in his Hand may justly pronounce, that Moral Honesty without Faith is insufficient to save Sinners. For if Regeneration and Reformation were Terms equivalent, or, in other Words, if mere Morality without the Aids of Revelation could procure God's Pardon and Friendship *Christ died in vain, we are yet in our Sins*. What then becomes of mere Morality? And if no Man be *absolutely* righteous, *no not one*, there is no such thing as unfinning Obedience, and where That is not, the Gospel is wanted to procure *present Peace* and future *Felicity*.

Moral Honesty when it is practised upon
 Christian Principles becomes *Christian Vir-*
tue, but of Itself, disjoined from evangelical
 Obedience, it will no more carry a Man to
 Heaven, then it will make him an ingenious
 Mechanic or a profound Philologer. And,
 strange as it may seem, there may be many
 mere Moralists at this Time with Dives, who
 was condemned because he did not regard *Moses*
and the Prophets: the like Fate awaiting them
 who do not obey Christ and his Apostles.
 But are not the various Expressions of Kind-
 ness towards Hospitals &c. acceptable to
 God and strictly meritorious? The Money
 bestowed on the Sick or the Friendless or
 the Helpless is *beneficial* to the *Receivers*,
 but the Generosity will avail the *Beneficent*
 Nothing unless it proceeds from a Principle
 of Christianity, inducing Them to succour
 the *Indigent* because They are the distressed
 Brethren of Christ, who then only rewards
 this *Liberality* when It is done to Him or for
 his Sake. In a Word, a Virtue which is not
 bottomed upon Christianity, a Morality which
 hath not Christ for the Object of its Faith and
 Reward will be of no Service hereafter to Him
 that possesses It. It should seem then that a
 Doctrine

Doctrine so clearly evangelical could meet with no Opposition from the *greatest* Advocates for religious Liberty.

But it is urged that the Test or Tryal of religious Opinions is conceived and expressed in the Words of weak and fallible Men, and that thereby *Error* may be established. But this Argument, if it deserves the Name of one, is weak and fallacious and *proves too much*, for upon as good Ground We may assert that by these Means the *Truth* may be established. Besides if the *Sense* be Scriptural, the *Words* or *Terms* of an Article are innocent: and how can any One's Apprehension of a Scripture-Doctrine be conveyed to Others but in the Words of weak and fallible Men? In whose Words are the Addresses to God in Prayer and the Appeals to Him by Oaths expressed? Are they not in the Words of weak and fallible Men? And how will a Petitioner against Subscriptions to Articles of Religion, when he hath accomplished his wishes, communicate his own theological Dogmas? Certainly in Terms, which *may be* deemed as *problematical* as *Those* which he complains of. But *Then* no one will be *compelled* to sign his Approbation of them. Be it so. No one is

compelled now, in any Sense compelled, to come into the Church of England. The Keeping of her Doors open can amount to no more than to a tacit Invitation. Where then is Compulsion? She hath pursued the mildest Measures to convince unreasonable Men without Success, and is now altogether on the Defensive; and as She has with Success repelled the fiery Darts that have been thrown at her, She still hopes that Clamour, Spite and Perfidy will not be able to dispossess her of That which hath been established by Wisdom and Moderation.

This ought to sheath Plebeian Malignity and rebate the Edge of Erastian Insolence. This should still the noisy unfettered Declaimer against ecclesiastical Shackles, and make him blush at his Dreams of starving Inquisitions while the Meat of the Church is yet in his Mouth and he is fed to Satiety. In your next Effort give Us a Model (insulted Truth hath a Claim upon You for One) of the Pile you yourselves are raising, and that you may not be precipitate remember that the Jews protested wisely against Herod's removing a single Stone of the Old Temple before all the Materials for the New
were

were collected and examined too with singular Severity. And if we may be allowed to conjecture — in whatever respect your Building and the Herodian may agree, in *This* they will differ, that God manifest in the Flesh, *Immanuel*, will not be found in your Structure.

4. And this leads me to mention another Particular, another Doctrine, which continues to be a *Stone of Stumbling and Rock of Offence* to the Conceited and Self-sufficient, and is at the Bottom of most of the Outcries against imaginary *Coercions*. I mean the *true Divinity* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, his Coequality, Coeternity and Consubstantiality with the Father and the holy Spirit.

This Doctrine is Matter of mere Revelation, taught expressly in the new Testament and is fairly deducible from the Old. The *Form of Baptism* proves it to proceed from the highest Authority, and the *Prayer* of the expiring Protomartyr is an irrefragable Argument of the *Deity* of Jesus, who in similar Language dismissed his Spirit into the Hands of his Father. St. John's chief Reason for committing his unerring Thoughts
to

to Writing was to assert, and dilate upon, this Point: and St. Paul, if I may so speak, alternates it with St. John in dwelling upon this glorious and all-concerning Subject. They that went in and out and companied with those heaven-directed Teachers propagated from *Them* and transmitted to succeeding Governors and Pastors this Information of a *Distinction* in the Godhead, and their Successors, collectively, individually and perpetually, did the Same. The first Fathers, the first Martyrs, the earliest Councils and Synods (to none of which we ascribe Infallibility but to all of them the best Intelligence) were consentient in this Article. So uniformly, so diffusively hath this Doctrine descended to Posterity. And other Arguments and other Arts, than have been hitherto employed, must stop its Prevalence. Now had it been an human Invention, It must, before this Time, have come to Nought. Pure Reason, which could not *discover* It, has had *Nothing* to object to it; and where there is such an Unanimity among the unprejudiced, uninfluenced Members of the holy Catholic Church in all Ages, it may be fairly presumed that what they maintained is of heavenly Extraction. And as no Fear of
offending

offending the Jews restrained the first Preachers from ascribing Powers *truly Divine* to the Messiah, so no Apprehension of strengthening *Polynheism* hindered them from inculcating this Truth on the Gentiles. In vain therefore is it insinuated that a valuable Accession will be made to the Church by expunging or softening this and other Articles of Faith. We know too well in whom we have believed not to shudder at the horrid Proposal. We cannot, we dare not disclaim the *Omnipotence*, the *Omniscience* and *infinite Goodness* of Christ, who is the *Creator*, the *Redeemer*, the *Saviour* and the *Judge* of the human Race. So that Insinuation and Exclamation will be equally insignificant, for We are neither to be cajoled nor terrified into an *Indifference* of Him by whom were all

“ Things created (now he that made all
 “ Things is God) that are in Heaven and
 “ that are in Earth, visible and invisible,
 “ whether They be Thrones, or Dominions,
 “ or Principalities, or Powers: all Things
 “ were created by him and for him. And
 “ He is before All Things, and by Him all
 “ Things consist. Wherefore associate your-
 “ selves, O ye People, and give Ear all ye of
 “ far Countries, take Counsel together, and
 “ it

"it shall come to nought, speak the Word
 "and it shall not stand --- for 78-139, God
 "is associated with Us, finishing in his glo-
 rified Humanity what he undertook for Sin-
 ners in the Day of his Humiliation. *Kings*
of the Earth have stood up and *Rulers* have
 taken *Counsel* together against the Lord and
 against the *Messiah*, saying, *Let us break their*
Bonds asunder and cast away their Cords from
Us. But they have seen their Projects blast-
 ed; and *Their* impotent Efforts are recorded
 to teach *Us* that *small Leagues* and *lesser Com-*
binations must of Course be broken in Pieces.
 The Doctrines of Satisfaction, Justification
 and Sanctification, which presuppose the De-
 generacy of human Nature, and the Neces-
 sity of a Propitiation, are mere Words in a
 System which, excludeth the Godhead of
 our Redeemer and the Acknowledgement of
 radical Corruption. The Foes to the First
 do, to an Individual, disallow the last. And
 indeed if *Nature* were not *Sick*, if the Crea-
 tion did not groan and travail together;
 there would have been no Occasion for the
 God of Nature to have left Heaven in order
 to heal it.

And

And now it may not be impertinent to demand, what are the *Merits* of the Men (surely they ought to be *special*) who, being sick of their solemn Engagements, would throw down Enclosures and let in a miscellaneous Multitude to lay waste a Vineyard, out of which the *Stones* have been gathered, and in which the *choicest Vine* is planted.

Are these Men well affected to the Constitution in Church and State? So are We. Are They Friends to civil and religious Liberty unmixed with democratical and heretical Pravity? So are We. Do They in the Day of Uproar and Faction seek Peace and ensue it? So do We. Do They at *all times seek the Peace of their Country*, knowing that *in the Peace thereof We shall have Peace*? We can without the least Hesitation conscientiously say *We do likewise*. Do They give to Cæsar the Things that are Cæsar's and to God the Things that are God's? *This is our known Practice* and it is unimpeachable. Do They think it reasonable by a *Test Act* to exclude Papists from *Places of Trust and Power*? So do We. Do They think that while the Papists are excluded, the ravaging Sectarist and

the bigotted Infidel may be safely admitted to Them? That We deem to be too much of a Contradiction to be digested by any one in his Senses. Do They hold a Toleration for the Relief of *tender Consciences* to be justifiable? a Toleration for the Relief of Consciences *really tender* we admit to be justifiable, upon Condition that the Toleration be *powerless*. Are they Advocates for the Exercise of private Judgement? *We* urge Men, *We* encourage them to examine and think for themselves in this distracted State of Things, and We need not be afraid to aver that a dispassionate Perusal of *The BOOK on Ecclesiastical Polity* would either prevent or cure any Disaffection to the Church established. Again. Do they condemn all Persecution for the Sake of Conscience? We do the Same, upon every Christian Principle We are acquainted with. Do They enter the Lists against Popery on proper Occasions? Our immortal Writings demonstrate the Antichristianism of Popery, which has *now* no Resource but in hypocritical Renunciations of Tenets which they will never part with, and in the dirty Employment of *purchasing* Converts. Lastly, will the Men, we are speaking of, oppose Those who would destroy the
Balance

Balance of Power in the Constitution by making the popular Scale preponderate? With Heart and Hand We are ready to unite against the seditious Attempt, and as ready to maintain the Rights and Properties of our Fellow Subjects.

Now if these Things be in Us and abound what Pretence have certain Petitioners to quarrel with their Countrymen? And what Incentives have our Governors to *disoblige* the Members of a Church (whereof *they themselves* are Members) that are so loyal, so patriotic, so peaceable, so tolerating, by gratifying the Request of a few peevish Men, who dream they are cruelly treated, because They cannot subvert what Wisdom hath erected and Experience justifies; and cut off the kind Hand that feeds them?

But if after all They will *re-associate*, take *fresh* Counsel and gird themselves *anew* — let them consider that he that *putteth on* his Harness should not boast Himself like Him that *putteth it off*. Victory is from Heaven. And the energetical fervent Prayers of this Church's Champions (and righteous Men they were, their *very Enemies* being Judges)

have saved her in six Troubles, yea in seven when they called upon IMMANUEL. Our Church is accustomed to invoke IMMANUEL. In the Evening and the Morning and at noon Day she applies to IMMANUEL as to her Sun and her Shield, and may therefore come boldly to *his* Throne (which endureth for ever and ever) for Grace to help in Time of Need; and her past deliverances are so many Earnests of future. She hath had little uninterrupted Peace for more than two hundred
 “ Years to this Hour, having had Trials of
 “ cruel Mockings, yea moreover of Bonds and
 “ Imprisonments. She hath been treated as a
 “ Deceiver and still found to be true, as dy-
 “ ing, and behold She liveth; She hath been
 “ chastened, but not killed, sorrowful but
 “ always rejoycing, poor, yet making many
 “ rich, as having Nothing and yet possessing
 “ all Things.” — And, to compleat her Tri-
 umph, She hath been “ in Perils among false
 “ Brethren, escaped them, and recovered of
 “ the Wounds withwhich She has been
 “ wounded in the House of her Friends.”

But when we commemorate a Deliverance We should remember that the Continuance of God's Goodness is *conditional*, for They
 who

who experience his Loving Kindness to Day may in the Revolution of a few Suns drink deep of the Cup of his Fury. This was exemplified in a most terrible Blow which the House of David received, the following Year, from those smoaking Firebrands, not yet burnt out, Rezin and Pekah, who invaded Judah again and made an Havoc only short of compleat Destruction. But then it must be noted that, in the interim, Judah had cast off the Thing that is good and therefore the Enemy pursued Him. For Ahaz and his People instead of being reformed by the Mercy, grew more wicked and perverse, than before, in absolutely rejecting Jehovah, and in cleaving to the worst Abominations of the heathen Nations around them, even to the making of their Sons and Daughters pass through the Fire to Molech. Let this Reverse of Things teach Us, not to be highminded but to *fear*, for if we are not bettered by the late Interposition of Heaven in our Favour by permitting the Son of God to reign over Us, our Enemies may band together again and with additional Forces work us greater Disquiet. Ahaz found his Enemies multiply upon *Him*; for, besides the Son of Remaliah and Rezin, He was assailed by the Edomites and the Philistines:

fittines : and, to compleat his Wretchedness,
Zicbri a factious Man of Ephraim followed
 the Blow, took Jerusalem, slew the King's
Son Maaseiah and most of the chief Gover-
 nors and great Men of the Kingdom. The
 Character of the *Father* in the simple, but
 emphatical, Language of the sacred Historian,
 is — *And in the Time of his Distress did he*
trespass yet more against the Lord: This is That
King Ahaz. Our Condition indeed is better,
 our Prospect more comfortable, for *We* have
 no Ahaz, no Thrower down nor Changer of
 Altars, no *complaisant* Urijah, who did ac-
 cording to *all* that King Ahaz commanded.
 Let us improve *Both* by fearing God and the
 King and by meddling not with them that are
 given to Change. And that the Throne may
 continue unshaken and Religion undefiled,
 let us beseech God, who into the Place of
 the Traitor Judas chose his faithful Servant
 Matthias, to grant that this Church being
 always preserved from false Apostles, may
 be ordered and guided by faithful and true
 Pastors constantly speaking the Truth, boldly
 rebuking Vice and patiently suffering for the
 Truth's Sake,

10 FEB 58

F I N I S.

